

STATEMENT ON THE QUESTION OF WAR-GUILT AND THE RESPONSIBILITY  
FOR FASCIST TERROR

Through the National Conference of the German Trade Unionists in Sweden and through every one of its organs, the German working class rejects any admission of guilt for the war or for fascist terror.

The German working class was the first victim of fascist terror. In the prisons and concentration camps, hundred of thousands of German workers were victims of fascist terror in the defensive struggle against fascism. Many were tortured to death and shot, hanged and decapitated. They offered their life in the struggle against fascism.

Heroically and in a desperate position, the German working class led its war against fascism in practically complete isolation and without any support from the Western democracies or from Russia. On the contrary, the destruction of the German working class movement was considered and hailed by powerful circles in England, in France and in America, as a security measure for the existence of capitalism. During the war of the German working class against fascism, the Western democracies and Russia entertained friendly relations with the fascist government of the Third Reich. At the outbreak of war, the German working class no longer possessed the strength and will to intervene and disrupt fascism's war machine. They had stood alone against fascism, and already before the outbreak of the war they had been beaten and slain. As for the Allied democracies, they did not in their war policies offer the slightest possibility for an alliance with the German working class. And when the German workers were forced into the army and were replaced by foreign workers numbering 12 to 14 million - i.e. as many as the total number of persons employed in Germany in peace-time - these foreign workers also failed to find any possibility of weakening appreciably the war potential of German fascism. The foreign workers can obviously not be held responsible for the war or for fascism's war-strength, but neither can the burden of such a culpability be imposed upon the German workers.

In reply to tendencies which have appeared on the Allied side, according to which "the occupation must be hard in order to rouse the sense of guilt of the German population", the German Trade Unionists declare that the German working class is not objectively guilty for of the war or the terror of fascism, that they have no actual cause to consider themselves guilty and that the harshness and injustices of the occupation can only be considered as the expression of imperialist tendencies. Far from developing a sense of guilt which is not justified by facts, the German Trade Unionists will be concerned in the development and strengthening of the workers' class consciousness.

Moreover, the principle of the sense of guilt and the arousing of the sense of guilt, cannot, according to all historical and psychological experience, be considered as a constructive, but solely as a destructive force. This principle is borrowed from the ideological arsenal of the reactionary, medieval church and reached its zenith at the time of the Inquisition and the witchcraft trials. Historically, the last master in the method of domination through the sense of guilt was the fascist Himmler. By attempting to load the guilt of fascism upon the entire German people, he was to ensure his domination over the German people up to the last and create the basis for the 'werewolves' partisan war. The German workers cannot believe that the people went to war against fascism, only to take over and develop fas-



cism's methods and ruling principles.

The German workers know that fascism and the war are the inescapable consequences of imperialism, of the economic imperialism which is being justified, recognised and applied by every State in the world. Rosa Luxemburg, murdered by the officer-bandits of the German army, taught the German workers : Imperialist politics are not the work of this or that State, they are the product of a certain degree of maturity attained by capitalist world development. No State can escape the consequences of this development ... The policy of individual States is dominated, as by some supreme blind ruling law, by the general tendency of present-day ~~xxxixix~~ capitalist politics, just as the laws of economic competition determine the conditions of production for the individual industrialist". The working class movement, in so far as it was and remains Socialist, being the main opponent of imperialism, cannot be declared to bear the guilt of the political and social consequences of imperialism.

Imperialism, with ~~xxx~~ fascism and war as its consequences, is one of capitalism's essentially and objectively inherent phases of development; nevertheless, men are the bearers of this development. In Germany, Nazis were the bearers of the last consequences of imperialism. The German workers hail the discrimination against the Nazis as bearers of Germany's imperialist policy and demand the firmest and thoroughest punishment, the liquidation, of all the guilty. They expect from the peoples of the Allied nations that they will not permit that the imperialist forces within the Allied camp should sabotage and impede the punishment of the fascist war criminals and ~~xxx~~ place them under their military protection, against the will of the German people. The discrimination against the bearers of imperialist world policy, which is contained in the punishment of German war criminals, is hailed by the German working class as a precedent for all future cases. This discrimination of imperialism rightly places the representatives of imperialist policy outside human society.

More important still for the German ~~xxxxxx~~ working class movement than the punishment of the war criminals, are the questions of reconstruction. The German Trade Unionists are of the opinion that the task of reconstruction is of such dimensions that it can only be mastered by the peoples of all nations working together in complete solidarity. The German workers hope to have the opportunity of collaborating with all their strength to this work of reconstruction and solidarity. After the radical liquidation of the Nazis the German people will be able to consecrate its forces 100% to this reconstruction work.

Stockholm, ~~28th~~ April 1945. Ernst Schmitt.

Submitted ~~xxxxxxxx~~ to the National Conference of the German Trade Unionists in Sweden.